

Dawn of Tomorrow

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Editorial

HALF FREE AND HALF SLAVES.

More than 50 years ago, Abraham Lincoln said: "This country cannot exist half free and half slaves." The country which he referred to was the United States of America but the truthfulness of his statement has thundered down through the ages with a significant meaning to every country, civilized or uncivilized, to all of the human races. No country nor any class of people can long remain half free and half slaves.

For the enslaved must ultimately burst the shackles that bind them or else return to abject slavery or a condition which is infinitely worse than slavery.

More than 100 years ago Great Britain gave freedom to and made citizens of every slave within her domain. Since that time the Canadian Negro has been a citizen with no fixed status. He has been given the privileges of citizenship; he has been treated with absolute fairness by the courts of justice; he has been given freely the right to vote, but his opportunities have been most limited. Let us here quote from an article by Mr. E. J. Carty: "She (Canada) detested slavery then as she detests it now. But intolerance dies hard, and there exists in most of us an almost unconscious prejudice, which leads us to keep the colored man on the ground, though we would abhor the charge that we would virtually perpetuate his slavery."

And still this prejudice "which leads us to keep the colored man on the ground" is perpetuating the Canadian Negro's slavery. It has caused him to be half free and half slave. It denies him the ways and means to educate his children. It refuses to recognize merit if it has no more common sense than cover itself with a dark skin. It refuses to give positions to capable colored men and colored women whose ancestors for five generations and more have been Canadians and British subjects. It stifles the ambitions of four talented boys and girls who otherwise would become an asset to Canada both in brains and in wealth. It gives that fine spirit of British justice and fair play a guilty conscience, and lastly it is a sure way to ring in the old order of things—slavery, or even a condition which is worse than slavery. Again we quote Mr. Carty: "But after all is said and done it lies first

with the colored men and women to make good and by dint of personal endeavour to shoulder themselves into the place they covet in the social scale—a place which will afford them equal opportunities to make a living, educate their children and live their lives in such peace and comfort as is the admitted right of those of any color in the station to which they belong. . . . For in the end the Canadian people are sound of heart and they come of a stock that loves the name and practice of fair play."

Lest we forget therefore, lest we degenerate into a race of slaves, let us, through one great band of unity, through education, thrift, industry and frugality, shoulder ourselves into the places which we covet. Let us prepare and superprepare ourselves and then we shall appeal to the soundness of heart of our more fortunate brothers for a man's chance in a free country.

DR. MILTON ROSS A FRIEND OF THE SLAVES

(Continued from page 1)

ate the information among their fellows and to meet a week later if they were determined to make a break for freedom. On the following Sunday night nine young men declared that they would gain their freedom or die in the attempt. To each of them Ross gave a compass, a knife and a supply of food. The routes were again gone over and they were advised to travel only by night, resting in some secure spot by day. How well they followed directions is shown by the fact that all nine safely reached Canada. The wife of one of them escaped six months later and joined her husband in Shatham.

Richmond was an unsafe place for Dr. Ross after this, so he went to Nashville, Tenn. Here he worked on similar lines, meeting the most intelligent Negroes, explaining the way to Canada and holding a final conference with those who were determined to escape. He was soon able to send letters to friends of the cause in the North to keep a sharp lookout for "packages of hardware." He was about ready to leave Nashville when a small printed bill was thrust into his hand detailing the escape of thirteen slaves from Richmond and offering a reward of \$1000 for their recovery. He lost no time in getting out of Nashville and went to Memphis, Tenn., where he found the newspapers reporting the abduction of slaves at Nashville, and offering a reward of \$1200 for apprehension of the abolitionist who was said to have aided the runaways. The description given of the abolitionist was strikingly correct and Dr. Ross lost no time in leaving his hotel and taking refuge with a Negro where he remained hidden until he could take a boat for St. Louis. But when he did leave it was not alone. While in hiding he heard a conversation in the next room that changed his plans. A woman was begging to be taken to Canada where her husband had gone two years before. She had run away from her master because of cruelty. Dr. Ross determined to help her and ordered her to dress in male attire so that she might pass as a valet. He had shaved off his beard and otherwise changed his appearance, wet

it was with beating heart that he boarded the boat and not until it had moved out into the stream did he feel safe. Arriving at St. Louis he took the woman on to Chicago and from there to Detroit, where an opportunity soon came to spirit her over the river. Her husband was located working in a barber shop in London, Ont. and within a few days they were reunited after a separation of two years.

The close of 1857 saw Dr. Ross in New Orleans undertaking yet more dangerous effort on behalf of the slaves. He had decided to make a journey through the whole of the lower South, spreading the knowledge of Canada. From New Orleans he first went to Vicksburg, where he posed as a naturalist collecting birds. Every opportunity was taken to talk to slaves and the owners unwittingly aided him by sending slaves to assist him in his researches and also by allowing him to roam at will over their plantations. In this way he became acquainted with slaves who were keen to spread the news of Canada. From Vicksburg he went on to Selma and to Columbus, Miss., where he ran into trouble. On trips out from Columbus he was accompanied by a slave who had his master's initials burned into his back. This man confided to Ross that he was determined to run away and asked for directions. Two or three days later, while seated at the supper table in his hotel, the doctor found himself the center of a group of slave-holders and angrily denounced as an abolitionist who was assisting slaves to run away. In a twinkling he was manacled and for a few minutes his very life seemed in danger. His request that he be taken before a magistrate was granted, however, and after spending the night in a cell infested with rats and vermin he was placed on trial. A crowd had gathered and evidence was given that the prisoner had gone out bird-hunting with a slave who had failed to return. The epithet "negro thief" was warmly applauded by the crowd. It was a tense moment as the judge turned to the prisoner and asked if he had anything to say. Just at this moment who should enter the courtroom but the slave himself who explained that he had gone to see his brother but had been detained by a sprained ankle. The judge immediately ordered the release of Dr. Ross. Some months later the doctor met the slave in Boston. He had run away within a week after the court episode.

Dr. Ross proceeded to Luka, then to Huntsville, Ala., and Augusta, Ga., circulating information among the slaves at each place. At Augusta he resumed his hunting operations and inside of two months equipped and sent forward eleven slaves, all of whom reached Canada safely.

"No one, not actually engaged in similar work," he says, "can clearly appreciate the extreme delicacy of my position. There was not a day, in fact scarcely an hour, that I did not live in expectation of exposure."

In a visit to several of the Western Ontario settlements a little later, Dr. Ross met no less than fifteen of the people whom he had assisted to freedom. They were all making their way successfully in their new homes.

FRED. LONDON.

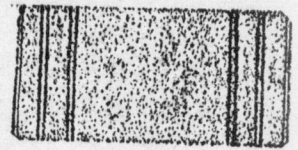
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